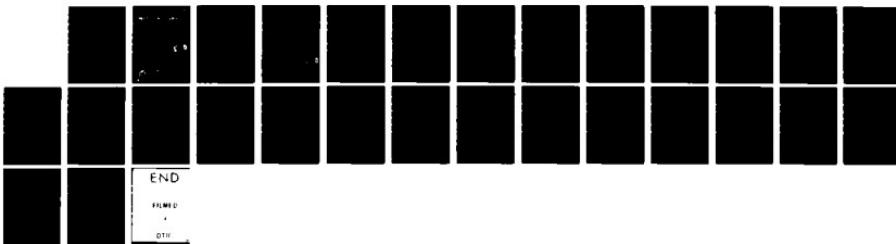
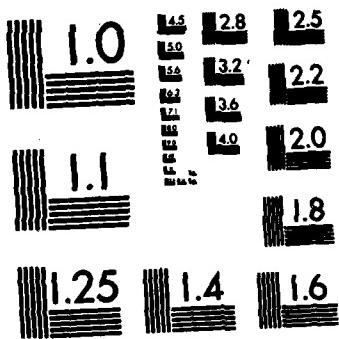


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BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL

Report To The Congress

OF THE UNITED STATES

Personnel Problems May Hamper Army's Individual Ready Reserve In Wartime

The strength level of the Individual Ready Reserve--the Army's primary source of pretrained individuals--is less than one-half the number needed to meet requirements in the early days of war or national emergency.

The actual shortage is probably worse, however, because reported strength includes persons who will not be available for early wartime assignments. Furthermore, assumptions about the percentage of reservists who are likely to report for duty were not scientifically established. Significant shortages in critical skills and uncertainties about refresher training needs further complicate the Army's wartime capabilities.

Proposals submitted in the 97th Congress to increase the strength level of the Individual Ready Reserve either lacked justification or did not provide enough information for the Congress to decide their merit. If the proposals are resubmitted during the 98th Congress, GAO recommends that, before deciding on the proposals, the Congress require the Army to provide the necessary justification and information.



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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON D.C. 20548

B-209772

To the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives

This report points out some serious personnel problems that would hamper the Army's Individual Ready Reserve in wartime. In addition, it questions the appropriateness and justification of legislative proposals submitted to the 97th Congress by the Department of Defense for increasing the Individual Ready Reserve's personnel strength. This report should be of particular interest if the proposals are resubmitted to the 98th Congress. We made this review primarily to determine what impact actions initiated by the Congress and Defense since 1977 have had on the Individual Ready Reserve.

We are sending copies of this report to the Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Secretary of Defense; and the Secretary of the Army.

A handwritten signature in cursive ink that reads "Charles A. Bowker".

Comptroller General
of the United States

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

PERSONNEL PROBLEMS MAY HAMPER
ARMY'S INDIVIDUAL READY
RESERVE IN WARTIME

D I G E S T

The strength level of the Individual Ready Reserve--the Army's primary source of pre-trained individuals--is severely short. The Army depends on the Individual Ready Reserve to reinforce Active Force and Selected Reserve units in the early days of war or national emergency. Since the discharge of a large pool of draftees at the end of the Vietnam conflict, the Individual Ready Reserve's strength level has significantly declined. To reduce these shortages, the Congress and the Department of Defense undertook various initiatives beginning in 1977. GAO made this review primarily to determine whether the initiatives have improved personnel strength. GAO found that:

--As of November 1982, the Individual Ready Reserve strength of about 227,000 was less than half the number needed to meet personnel requirements. This figure is not as meaningful as it could be, however, because reports submitted annually to the Congress on personnel resources and requirements do not separately disclose the number of individuals who will not be available for early wartime assignments, e.g., individuals for whom no current address is available. (See pp. 4 and 5.)

--Some Individual Ready Reserve members may not be suitable for service. Under the Army's expeditious discharge program, some persons with social or emotional problems are transferred to the Individual Ready Reserve. (See pp. 5 and 6.)

--Yield rates--the percentage of Individual Ready Reserve members expected to report for duty upon mobilization--are based on assumptions that were not scientifically established. The Army, however, has initiated actions which could enable it to more scientifically estimate yields in the future. The Army has also taken actions to achieve higher yield goals--rates the Army

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hopes to achieve in the future--prescribed by the Department of Defense. Army officials acknowledged, however, that while these actions should help to improve yield rates, their potential impact could not be measured. (See pp. 7 and 8.)

--Because the Army lacks current addresses on many Individual Ready Reserve members, it cannot be certain that members can be reached in the event of war. In addition, questionnaires sent out by the Army to collect information needed to assign members to wartime positions are not always returned. Therefore, the Army does not know how current the information is in its data base. (See pp. 8 and 9.)

--Individuals having critical skills needed upon mobilization are in short supply. To attract persons to critical skill positions, the Army recently tried a direct enlistment program (which committed individuals only to initial active duty training and periodic refresher training) and a reenlistment bonus program (which provided a \$600 bonus for each reenlistment). Both programs fell considerably short of achieving goals. Defense submitted proposals in the 97th Congress to reauthorize the two programs and to provide bonuses up to \$1,000 for direct enlistments and bonuses up to \$900 for reenlistments. The Army, however, has not determined whether the limited training undergone by participants in the direct enlistment program is enough to maintain proficient soldiers. Nor has Defense justified its proposal to increase the bonus amount for reenlistments. (See pp. 9 - 11.)

The Army has not fully assessed the importance of refresher training for Individual Ready Reserve members. Although the Army has developed information on the frequency and duration of training requirements for various skills, it has not finalized a refresher training program for skills required in the early days of a war. Training now available in these skills should be improved as results of skill deterioration analyses become available. (See p. 11.)

--The Army has been providing refresher training to a small number of reservists, but the training has not been formalized nor has it been directed to skills needed most. (See p. 12.)

To increase Individual Ready Reserve strength levels, Defense proposed legislation during the 97th Congress to increase the total military service obligation from 6 to 8 years. Since this would generally increase the portion of the total obligation served in the Individual Ready Reserve, GAO believes that developing a viable refresher training program would be essential for maintaining members' skills. (See p. 13.)

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY**

GAO recommends that the Secretary of the Army:

- Disclose in Individual Ready Reserve strength reports the numbers of members who cannot be given early wartime assignments.
- Seek authority from the House Committee on Armed Services to limit expeditious discharge program transfers to the Individual Ready Reserve to those individuals who have performed honorably.
- Periodically survey a random sample of Individual Ready Reserve members to obtain current and historical data (within the past 6 to 12 months) on availability.
- Use the periodic contacts made through the enlistment personnel management program to emphasize to members having skills required in the first 30 days of a mobilization, the importance of participating in the voluntary refresher training program.
- Use the contacts made through the enlisted personnel management program also to emphasize to members the importance of responding to semiannual questionnaires for personnel data.
- Develop and maintain data on response rates to the semiannual questionnaire to assess whether more Individual Ready Reserve members are responding than in the past.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONGRESS

The 97th Congress did not act upon Defense's proposals for (1) a direct enlistment and reenlistment bonus for the Individual Ready Reserve or (2) an increase in the military service obligation. If Defense resubmits a bonus proposal during the 98th Congress for direct enlistment in the Individual Ready Reserve, the Congress, before authorizing such a bonus, should require the Army to determine whether the training undergone by participants in the direct enlistment program is enough to maintain proficient soldiers. Also, the Congress should require the Army to justify the proposed bonus amount for Individual Ready Reserve reenlistments before reauthorizing a reenlistment bonus program.

In addition, if Defense resubmits a proposal during the 98th Congress to increase the military service obligation, the Congress, before deciding on the proposal, should require the Army to provide estimates of the funding required to provide the periodic training necessary for members to maintain their skills. The Congress should weigh this information against the benefits of increased Individual Ready Reserve service.

AGENCY COMMENTS

Defense and the Army generally agreed with this report's findings but disagreed with most of GAO's recommendations.

The major areas of disagreement related to GAO's recommendations on the proposals to authorize direct and reenlistment bonus programs and on the extension of the military service obligation. Regarding the direct enlistment program, the Army plans to evaluate whether the training undergone by those enlisted in the 1983 program is sufficient to develop proficient soldiers. GAO believes that soldier proficiency of those who participated in the earlier direct enlistment program should be evaluated before a bonus is authorized.

The Army also said that the previous reenlistment program was viable, but the \$600 bonus amount was too small. Defense said it

would be counterproductive to devote more resources to justify the proposed \$900 bonus amount. The Army, however, experienced a 400-percent increase in participation during the last 2 months of its fiscal year 1981 test due to changes in administrative procedures. If data does not already exist to justify the increased amount, the Army could seek authority to test the \$600 amount for a full year, using streamlined procedures it adopted in August 1981.

Regarding its proposal to increase the military service obligation, Defense agrees that additional refresher training may be required; however, it contends that costs would not be incurred until at least 6 years after the proposal's enactment and future budget requests would include necessary training funds. GAO believes that extending the military service obligation to solve shortfalls in the Individual Ready Reserve is a possible solution only if it results in maintaining proficient soldiers. Furthermore, the Congress should know now what additional costs will be incurred in order to make informed decisions about whether this proposal is an appropriate solution to the problem.

Agency comments and GAO's evaluation are discussed in detail in chapter 3.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| GAO | General Accounting Office |
| IRR | Individual Ready Reserve |
| OSD | Office of the Secretary of Defense |
| RCPAC | Reserve Components Personnel and Administration Center |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) is the primary source of pretrained individuals upon which the Army depends to augment the Active Force and Selected Reserve ^{1/} units in the event of a war or a national emergency. The IRR will be used to increase Active Force and Selected Reserve units from peacetime to wartime strength, provide replacements for combat casualties during the early days of conflict, and increase the size of the support base in the continental United States. The IRR consists primarily of men and women who have recently completed 2 to 4 years of active duty and who have some remaining period of their 6-year statutory obligation to be served in the IRR. Also in the IRR are men and women who have voluntarily remained beyond their statutory obligation.

The number of IRR members declined from about 700,000 in 1973, when the draft ended, to 168,000 at the end of fiscal year 1978. The major factor in this decline was the discharge of a large pool of draftees at the end of the Vietnam conflict, which reduced the size of the Active Force, which in turn decreased the number of individuals leaving active duty and entering the IRR. Increased recruiting of veterans by Selected Reserve units also contributed to the reduction.

To reduce the shortages, the Congress and the Department of Defense undertook various initiatives. In July 1977, the Congress passed legislation extending the 6-year service obligation to women, and in 1979, it extended the 6-year obligation to all persons entering the Armed Forces regardless of age (previously, the 6-year obligation did not apply to persons 26 years and older). In 1980 the Congress authorized an IRR reenlistment bonus program which offered a \$600 bonus to prior service members reenlisting in the IRR for a 3-year term.

Administrative actions initiated by Defense to increase IRR strength included:

--Directing the Army to increase the IRR yield rate--the percentage of reservists who are likely to report for duty--from 70 percent to 90 percent of the total IRR strength.

^{1/}Selected Reserve members serve in organized units and are paid for drilling on weekends (generally 1 weekend each month) and for attending a 2-week period of active duty training each year.

- Testing an IRR direct enlistment option and a 2-year enlistment option for the Active Force and a 3-year enlistment option for the Selected Reserve.
- Screening persons before they complete their active duty enlistment for transfer to the IRR instead of discharge.
- Discontinuing automatic transfer of individuals from IRR to Standby Reserve for the sixth year of service obligation.
- Eliminating credit for time spent in the delayed entry program 2/ toward fulfillment of the 6-year obligation.
- Improving IRR officer and enlisted personnel management.

As a result of these actions, and other reasons, such as the decline in the economy, the IRR's strength level has increased from 168,000 at the end of fiscal year 1978 to about 227,000 as of November 1982. This strength level, however, is less than one-half the number needed to meet personnel requirements during the first 90 days of war. According to Army projections for fiscal year 1983, about 456,000 IRR personnel would be needed.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Our objectives were to determine whether (1) legislative and administrative actions significantly improved IRR strength, (2) all persons comprising the IRR are available for wartime assignments, (3) yield rates were scientifically established, (4) the critical skills needed upon mobilization are available, and (5) the Army has assessed the importance of refresher training to help IRR members maintain their technical skills.

We worked at the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and Army Headquarters, Washington D.C.; the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia; the U.S. Army Training Board, Fort Eustis, Virginia; and the Reserve Components Personnel and Administration Center (RCPAC), St. Louis, Missouri.

We obtained information on the various legislative and administrative actions affecting the IRR that began in 1977 and determined the change in IRR staffing levels from September 1978 to November 1982. We discussed the basis for the Army's

2/A program in which recruits may sign a contract to enter the Armed Services but are granted a delay before actual entry.

estimated percentage of IRR members who would report for duty with Army and OSD officials. We also reviewed policies, procedures, and response rates for Army questionnaires on whether members will be available for duty. To determine whether all persons comprising the IRR are available for wartime assignments, we reviewed assignment plans and discussed the employment of IRR personnel with Army officials.

We also reviewed personnel records of 12 individuals transferred to the IRR who had failed to maintain acceptable standards for retention in the Active Force or Reserve units. We made this review to gain insight into the justifications for transfer. These records were selected at random from the files of persons being transferred under the expeditious discharge program and are not projectable to the universe of IRR personnel or the expeditious discharge program.

We analyzed IRR personnel data according to career management fields and, to determine whether there were shortages, compared results with projected requirements. We obtained the views of Training and Doctrine Command officials on the need for periodic refresher training and discussed training plans with officials within the Offices of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans and for Personnel. We performed this review in accordance with generally accepted Government audit standards from April 1981 to March 1982.

CHAPTER 2

PERSONNEL PROBLEMS LIMIT IRR'S ABILITY TO MOBILIZE

The Army's IRR will be called upon to play a critical role in case of war or national emergency. Its ability to do so, however, is hampered by insufficient personnel strength. This problem is compounded further by (1) the unavailability of some IRR members, (2) uncertain yield rates, (3) inaccurate data on availability, (4) shortages in critical skills, and (5) the lack of a refresher training program.

Proposals submitted in the 97th Congress to increase IRR strength either lacked justification or did not provide enough information for the Congress to decide their merit.

NOT ALL IRR PERSONNEL ARE AVAILABLE FOR WARTIME ASSIGNMENTS

The IRR strength figure presented in Defense's Manpower Requirements Report, which is submitted annually to the Congress, includes all persons assigned to the IRR. This figure is not as meaningful as it could be, however, because not all members can be assigned to fill vacancies in Active Force and Selected Reserve units or to replace combat casualties during the early days of conflict. As of November 1982, about 41,300, or 18 percent, of the IRR strength level (227,524) were in this category, as shown below.

| <u>Reason not available</u> | <u>Number</u> |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Address not available | 28,800 |
| Untrained personnel | 6,200 |
| Other | <u>6,300</u> |
| Total | <u>41,300</u> |

Address information is not available for many IRR members because RCPAC has not received personnel records from the Active Force or Selected Reserve units from which the individuals have been separated. RCPAC officials said it may take as long as 60 to 120 days to receive and input this data into the computer file. Army officials said that this figure should decrease in the future because, as of October 1982, automated records provide RCPAC with address information on Army personnel separating from active duty.

Untrained personnel consist of individuals who have been discharged before completing active duty training (because of

disciplinary problems, for example), but who are considered by unit commanders as having the potential for carrying out wartime assignments. If war broke out, these persons would be assigned to mobilization stations for training.

The category of "other" includes reservists who have been temporarily excluded from assignment because of (1) a physical disqualification, (2) civilian jobs critical to national defense or the community, or (3) incomplete personnel records (for example, missing data on military skill, grade, or marital status).

The number of personnel not available for early wartime assignments, as discussed above, is known with certainty and should be disclosed in the Army's report to the Congress. Although, in a separate section of the report, the Army provides an estimate of the number of members expected to report for duty upon mobilization (yield rates), this number includes Standby reservists, recalled retirees, and others and therefore does not separately disclose available IRR personnel. Yield rates are discussed further on page 7.

CERTAIN IRR PERSONNEL MAY NOT BE
SUITABLE FOR SERVICE

Besides certain IRR members who will not be available for early wartime assignments, there are others whose suitability for service is questionable.

Under the Army's expeditious discharge program, service members may be discharged or transferred to the IRR before completing their military obligation for one or more of the following: (1) poor attitude, (2) lack of motivation, (3) lack of self-discipline, (4) inability to adapt socially or emotionally, and (5) failure to demonstrate promotion potential. Individuals whose service is characterized as "honorable"^{3/} are automatically transferred to the IRR. Commanders screen others whose performance has been "under honorable conditions"^{4/} and

^{3/}Service is characterized as "honorable" if overall performance was satisfactory even if the member committed some minor and infrequent infractions.

^{4/}Service characterized as "under honorable conditions" indicates the member may be a troublemaker but his/her conduct is not cause for a discharge "under less than honorable conditions." A general discharge is characterized as "under honorable conditions."

may recommend either transfer to the IRR or a general discharge. A commander's recommendation is based solely on a judgment that these service members may, at some future time, mature and become an asset to the IRR. RCPAC assigns these members to wartime assignments in the same manner as it assigns other IRR personnel. The program began in October 1979. Between that time and September 1981, about 4,600 individuals had been transferred to the IRR in connection with the expeditious discharge program. The active duty service of about 1,700, or 37 percent, of the 4,600 transfers was characterized as under honorable conditions.

We reviewed personnel records of 12 individuals transferred to the IRR under the expeditious discharge program to determine whether the commanders indicated why the individuals were being transferred to the IRR instead of being discharged. The records did not indicate the reason for transfer but did cite individual problems, including apathy, poor attitude, inability to adjust to military life, and one or more citations for misconduct. All of the more serious problems we noted were associated with 6 of the 12 transferees whose service was characterized as under honorable conditions. One individual's record for example, showed assault and battery charges, larceny of Government property, possession of drug paraphernalia, and a special court martial conviction. This person had been in the service for more than 2 years.

The number of individuals transferred under the expeditious discharge program has increased substantially. In fiscal year 1981, about 3,400 persons were transferred, representing a 153-percent increase over 1980 transfers. Although our sample of cases cannot be projected to the entire program or the IRR, we believe it raises questions about the suitability of some members transferred under this program.

In addition, there are other individuals who may have performed honorable active service but, because of personal reasons, were transferred to the IRR. As of September 1981, about 7,200 service members had been transferred because of dependency (those who have become sole supporters of their families due to the death of a spouse), medical deficiencies, or other reasons. Because some of these conditions could continue during the remainder of one's service obligation, we question whether the members will be suitable or available in the event of war.

YIELD RATES NOT SCIENTIFICALLY ESTABLISHED

An IRR yield rate is the expected percentage of IRR members who will report for duty upon mobilization. The percentage is used to estimate the IRR's ability to meet personnel strength objectives by applying the percentage to total IRR strength and comparing the result with needs. This result should be distinguished from the number of IRR personnel who the Army knows, with certainty, will not be available for early wartime assignments. (See p. 4.) As pointed out on page 5, the Army does not exclude certain individuals from the total IRR strength before applying yield rates. For wartime planning, the Army has been using a 90-percent yield rate for officers and bonus recipients and a 70-percent yield rate for all other members. The 70-percent yield rate is based on the services' limited experience in Korea, Berlin, and Vietnam mobilizations. The 90-percent rate is based on the assumption that officers and bonus recipients would be more conscientious and patriotic about fulfilling their service obligation than other IRR members. However, there is no data to support this assumption.

During 1981 and 1982 Defense Appropriations hearings, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics) stated that OSD had directed the services to improve management of the IRR so that it could expect a 90-percent yield for all members by 1985. We found, however, that data is not available to support the proposed higher yield goal. Furthermore, Army mobilization planners said that, while they had initiated certain personnel management improvements, there was no data to support reaching the higher yield goal. They stated that certain factors affecting member availability, such as incorrect addresses or hospital confinements, could be determined. According to these planners, however, the number of people who would not report for duty when called because of apathy or other reasons prevented them from arriving at a concrete yield rate.

To achieve the higher yield goals prescribed by OSD, the Army has made changes to its officer and enlisted personnel management programs. The programs provide counseling for persons before they are separated from active service. Under the programs, each IRR member is assigned a personnel management officer who is responsible for contacting members periodically to offer assistance in military personnel matters, such as active duty training opportunities. Also, these personnel management officers remind members about their continuing military obligation and encourage reenlistment.

RCPAC plans to place personnel management officers at those posts from which most service members are separated to counsel them about their service obligation in the IRR. These posts are Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Dix, New Jersey; Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Fort Knox, Kentucky; and Oakland Army Base, California. As of October 1982, a date had not been set for implementing this plan. RCPAC officials said that while these actions should help to improve yield rates, their potential impact could not be measured.

AVAILABILITY DATA IN PERSONNEL
FILES MAY NOT BE USEFUL OR ACCURATE

Although the Army collects data from IRR members regarding their availability, this information is not enough to use to estimate the percentage of reservists who will report for duty when called. Furthermore, the low response rate to the questionnaire used to collect the data raises questions about the accuracy and usefulness of the data in the personnel file.

RCPAC maintains and updates the personnel data base on IRR members. Each IRR member is sent a semiannual questionnaire requesting validation of data, such as address, social security number, marital status, physical condition, military skills, and current job. RCPAC uses this data in assigning members to mobilization stations and in revising the availability status of members on the basis of physical condition or hardship. The Army does not keep information that could be used to develop historical trends on factors affecting IRR availability, such as hospital confinements, incarcerations, and personal hardships. It has, however, gathered national demographic data which may be used in quantifying some factors affecting IRR availability. The Army plans to use this and other actuarial-type data for future yield estimates. Army officials said that a prototype model was expected to be completed by January 1983 and actual data was to be applied in early 1983.

The more current the data, the more useful it can be. Questionnaires sent out by the Army to collect information needed to assign members to wartime positions, however, are not always returned. Furthermore, the Army does not keep records on the response rate of the questionnaires that are returned. Using personnel information provided by RCPAC for fiscal year 1980, the Defense Audit Service estimated a 45-percent response

rate. 5/ Because of the importance of current addresses to mobilization capability, RCPAC has requested the Postal Service to return questionnaires having forwarding addresses. In this regard, RCPAC prefers to have current addresses rather than risk non-responses to questionnaires that could be forwarded.

In addition, for several years, Defense has been seeking authority to use Internal Revenue Service taxpayer records to update IRR address information. It has developed a legislative proposal which is under review by the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of the Treasury.

SIGNIFICANT SHORTAGES OF PERSONNEL IN CRITICAL SKILLS

The low overall strength level in the IRR is compounded further by shortages of individuals in critical skills. As of November 1982, the most significant shortages were concentrated in combat arms and medical skills. Army mobilization planners told us that these skills will be needed the most during the early days of war.

A skill is deemed critical if (1) it is necessary to the success of the mobilization mission and (2) there is at least a 10-percent shortage of persons available with the required skill. The table below compares strength levels for enlisted members, by career management field, with the number of vacancies in Active Force and Selected Reserve units as of November 1982.

| <u>Career management fields</u> | <u>No. of Active and Reserve unit requirements</u> | <u>No. of IRR members available</u> | <u>Difference</u> | <u>Percentage shortfall</u> |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Combat arms: | | | | |
| Infantry | 43,554 | 17,344 | -26,210 | 60 |
| Combat engineering | 11,777 | 6,828 | -4,949 | 42 |
| Field artillery | 16,695 | 8,667 | -8,028 | 48 |
| Air defense artillery | 4,669 | 3,280 | -1,389 | 30 |
| Armor | 12,497 | 5,734 | -6,763 | 54 |
| Medical | 44,851 | 8,176 | -36,675 | 82 |

5/"Report on the Review of the Reserve Components' Common Personnel Data System", Defense Audit Service, (No. 82-062, February 4, 1982)

The shortage becomes greater when one considers the number of IRR members who will be needed to replace casualties. For example, for a war based in Europe in 1982, Army mobilization planners estimated that there would be 225,000 casualties during the first 90 days of war.

Recent Army efforts aimed at reducing skills shortages included a direct enlistment program and a reenlistment bonus program. The direct enlistment program, which was started in April 1979, was limited to persons enlisting in critical skill career management fields. Individuals in this program would be committed only to (1) an initial period of active duty for basic and skills training and (2) 2 weeks of refresher training in the third and fifth years of their service obligation. After successfully completing initial active duty training, individuals would be given the option of remaining in the IRR or transferring to the Active Army or Selected Reserve.

The direct enlistment program was tested for 6 months in the following designated recruiting districts: Houston, Texas; Portland, Oregon; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Omaha, Nebraska. OSD hoped to enlist 1,500 persons; however, by the end of the test, it had enlisted only 429. Because direct enlistees have limited training and experience, some Army officials question whether the enlistees can perform their duties in the event of war.

In September 1980 the Congress authorized an IRR reenlistment bonus program, which offered a \$600 bonus to prior service members reenlisting for a 3-year term. A member would receive \$300 upon reenlistment and \$100 at each anniversary date. Bonus recipients were to possess a military specialty designated as critical to mobilization needs. The Army hoped to reenlist 10,000 individuals for fiscal year 1981; however, as of August 1981, only about 800 applications had been approved. Because of these results, the Congress did not renew the program for fiscal year 1982.

Funds were not appropriated for the reenlistment bonus program until December 1980, and the program was not implemented until March 1981. Consequently, it had been operating for less than 6 months when the Congress decided in July 1981 not to reauthorize the program for fiscal year 1982. Subsequently, the Army streamlined reenlistment procedures and changed the policy to (1) pay the bonus in one lump sum, and (2) revise eligibility provisions to include persons within 1 year (previously 90 days) of completing their service obligation. Between August 1 and September 30, 1981, the number of reenlistments climbed to almost 4,000.

OSD believes that the direct enlistment and reenlistment bonuses are a key means of increasing IRR strength and submitted legislative proposals to the 97th Congress for their reinstatement in fiscal year 1983. The proposed direct enlistment program differed from the 1979 pilot primarily in that it would authorize an enlistment bonus up to \$1,000. Under the proposed IRR reenlistment bonus program, bonus amounts would range up to \$900, depending on the type of skill possessed by the member. Army officials told us that the objective of the proposed program is to reenlist 13,000 members in fiscal year 1983.

In its February 1982 report to the Congress on plans for reducing personnel shortages, OSD stated that increasing the bonus amount was both cost effective and necessary. However, OSD does not have data to support this position.

Another initiative aimed at reducing skills shortages is the overstaffing of Selected Reserve units in geographical areas having high density populations and good recruiting prospects. According to Army mobilization planning officials, overstaffing will be directed to critical skills only and will not exceed total personnel authorizations. Army officials told us that recruits enlisting in overstaffed units will be informed that, in event of war, they will mobilize with their units and may be reassigned at the mobilization station.

IMPORTANCE OF IRR REFRESHER TRAINING NOT FULLY ASSESSED

Although the Army recognizes that without periodic training military skills will deteriorate over time, it has not completed studies on how soon and to what extent certain skills possessed by IRR members will begin to deteriorate. More important, the Army has not finalized an IRR refresher training program for those skills required in the early days of a war.

The rate and extent of skill deterioration is obviously affected by a number of variables, including length of time since the task was performed, individual capabilities, and the nature of the skill. A 1979 study by the U.S. Army Research Institute for Behavioral and Social Science on "Retention of Basic Soldiering Skills" shows that some basic skills deteriorate rapidly. For example, when 341 active duty soldiers who had completed initial training were tested 6 and 12 months later, the study showed that the soldiers' ability to perform all steps related to the tasks had deteriorated.

| <u>Tasks</u> | <u>No. of steps involved in task</u> | Percentage of soldiers that could not perform all steps after: | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|------------------|
| | | <u>6 months</u> | <u>12 months</u> |
| Assemble/disassemble grenade launcher | 9 | 57 | 100 |
| Put on gas mask | 15 | 45 | 96 |
| Perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation | 14 | 36 | 78 |
| Inspect and fire light anti-tank weapon | 12 | 40 | 86 |

Because most IRR personnel do not take annual skills training, it seems probable that their skill proficiency will diminish further.

In 1975, the House Committee on Appropriations directed that involuntary training of IRR members be terminated and that voluntary training be provided. A primary reason for this change was concern that members were not receiving proficiency training in their military occupational specialties. Furthermore, the Committee believed that requiring individuals who are not members of reserve units to participate in training was inconsistent with the All-Volunteer Force. We found that less than 2 percent (2,782) of the total enlisted IRR members received training in fiscal year 1981 and that many of these members did not receive training in their mobilization specialties or skills. In addition, the voluntary training program was not formalized in terms of specific tasks to be refreshed nor was it directed to skills needed most.

In June 1981 OSD appealed to the Committee to reconsider its restriction on training for IRR members. It pointed out that it was necessary for some IRR members to participate in periodic refresher training to maintain their technical skills. The Committee, in November 1981, approved OSD's request and authorized involuntary training for IRR members who were required in the first 30 days of a mobilization and who possessed skills requiring periodic refresher training.

OSD has left the use of this involuntary training authority to the discretion of the service Secretaries. The Army, in assessing IRR training needs, informed us that it has (1) identified training priorities for critical skills required in the first 30 days and (2) on the basis of the professional judgment of Training and Doctrine Command officials, developed information on the frequency and duration of refresher training

requirements for all skills. However, the Army has not yet completed a program for providing the training required for critical skills. Data we have collected confirm these facts. The Army said that information on requirements for critical skills training is being used by RCPAC for managing refresher training and that ongoing skill deterioration analyses will form the basis of further improvements to its existing refresher training programs.

Although the Army believes that the involuntary training authority provides needed flexibility, it does not believe it will be necessary to use the authority soon. According to Army officials, the Army has more volunteers than money to train them. Army officials also said that training policy must be equitable and compatible with the current All-Volunteer Force environment. According to these officials, the existing authority to enforce involuntary training--recall members to active duty for up to 45 days--is impractical. Accordingly, the Army plans to emphasize its voluntary refresher training program, focusing available funds on those skills most needed in the early days of an emergency. Available training in these skills should be improved as results of skill deterioration analyses become available.

To increase IRR strength, OSD proposed to the 97th Congress that the Secretary of Defense be given authority to increase the military service obligation from 6 years to 8 years. Since OSD's proposal would generally increase that portion of the total obligation served in the IRR, developing a refresher training program would be essential for maintaining members' skills.

OSD, while acknowledging a concern about greater skill deterioration associated with longer IRR service, stated in its February 1982 report to the Congress that funds would be necessary to provide refresher training for members to maintain their skills, but provided no estimate of how much money was needed. OSD concluded that this initiative could add substantial IRR members at minimal or no cost. While this statement may be true with respect to recruiting, it does not reflect the training costs required to maintain members' skills over the longer service obligation.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

CONCLUSIONS

Personnel problems limit the IRR's capability in wartime. Because not all IRR members are available for assignment during the early days of war, reports of IRR strength are not as meaningful as they could be. An accurate disclosure of the number of members who cannot be given early wartime assignments would improve the usefulness of strength reports. Reported strength also includes several thousand individuals who have failed to maintain standards acceptable for retention in the Active Force or Reserve components. We question the merit of transferring such persons to the IRR, since they could be more of a disciplinary problem than a mobilization asset.

Currently, the Army does not collect and maintain information that will permit it to make sound decisions and projections about IRR yields. In our view, the extent of yield uncertainty should be minimized by collecting and analyzing available data and estimating the maximum yield that can be expected if all available members report for duty. Although the semiannual questionnaire on member availability now in use could perhaps be expanded to collect necessary information, serious problems with its response rate diminish its utility. A periodic questionnaire to a random sample of members could, in our view, be managed more easily. The Army has an effort underway which also could enable it to more scientifically estimate yields. Additionally, actions are needed to improve the response rate of the Army's semiannual questionnaire.

Because the Army maintains that it receives more training requests than it can currently fund, it will be important to focus available funds on those skills most needed in the early days of a war or national emergency. Also, Defense's proposal to the 97th Congress to increase the military service obligation is meaningful only if periodic refresher training is provided to members.

The Army has not determined whether the limited training undergone by participants in the direct enlistment program is sufficient to maintain proficient soldiers. Until this is done, we do not believe that an enlistment bonus should be authorized for such recruits. Given the lack of detailed information in OSD's report to the Congress, we believe that the Army should justify what reenlistment bonus amount is needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

We recommend that the Secretary of the Army:

- Disclose in IRR strength reports the numbers of members who cannot be given early wartime assignments.
- Seek authority from the House Committee on Armed Services to limit expeditious discharge program transfers to the IRR to those individuals who have performed honorably.
- Periodically survey a random sample of IRR members to obtain current and historical data (within the past 6 to 12 months) on availability. Mobilization planners should use this data in developing trends on availability and in estimating the percentage of IRR members that will report to duty when called.
- Use the periodic contacts made through the enlisted personnel management program to emphasize to members having skills required in the first 30 days of a mobilization, the importance of participating in the voluntary refresher training program.
- Use the contacts made through the enlisted personnel management program also to emphasize to members the importance of responding to semiannual questionnaires for personnel data.
- Develop and maintain data on response rates to the semiannual questionnaire to assess whether more IRR members are responding than in the past.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONGRESS

The 97th Congress did not act upon Defense's proposals for (1) a direct enlistment and reenlistment bonus for the IRR, or (2) an increase in the military service obligation. If Defense resubmits a bonus proposal during the 98th Congress for direct enlistment in the IRR, the Congress, before authorizing such a bonus, should require the Army to determine whether the training undergone by participants in the direct enlistment program is enough to maintain proficient soldiers. Also, the Congress should require the Army to justify the proposed bonus amount for IRR reenlistments before reauthorizing a reenlistment bonus program.

In addition, if Defense resubmits a proposal during the 98th Congress to increase the military service obligation, the Congress, before deciding on the proposal, should require the Army to provide estimates of the funding required to provide the periodic training necessary for members to maintain their skills. The Congress should weigh this information against the benefits of increased IRR service.

AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

The Department of Defense and the Army generally agreed with our findings but disagreed with most of our recommendations.

The Army disagreed with our recommendation that it disclose in IRR strength reports the numbers of members not available for early wartime assignments. The Army does not dispute the fact that the IRR strength figure presented in Defense's Manpower Requirements Report includes many individuals who are unavailable for early assignment. It points out, however, that these individuals are excluded in that section of the report which discloses the supply of pretrained individual manpower and, therefore, believes that reported strength is not misleading. We disagree with the Army because the supply of pretrained individuals is reported in the aggregate (includes Standby reservists, recalled retirees, and others), and therefore, does not separately disclose available IRR personnel. Furthermore, the IRR supply data referred to by the Army is the number of members the Army expects to report for duty upon mobilization. This number results from applying yield rates to total IRR personnel strength. Our point does not pertain to expected yield (supply), but rather to the number of members who can be given an early wartime assignment. As pointed out on page 4, actual data on members not eligible for early assignments is available.

The Army also disagreed with our statement that the problem of insufficient IRR personnel strength is compounded by other factors (see p. 4). The Army said that the personnel shortage calculation already considers unavailability of some members, uncertain yield rates, and inaccurate data on availability and therefore, it is not compounded by these factors. We agree that the shortage calculation does include these factors. However, our point is that these factors, along with such factors as shortages in critical skills, results in a personnel problem that is greater than one of only insufficient personnel strength.

In a draft of this report, we proposed that the Army discontinue transfers to the IRR, of persons separated from the

Active Force or Selected Reserve under the expeditious discharge program. The Army believed that our language implied that it transfers personnel separated under other than honorable conditions.

The Army told us that it transfers all individuals who have performed honorably and screens those having performed under honorable conditions (these persons are subject to a general discharge) for possible transfer. We have changed this report to recognize that screening applies only to the latter category of transferees (see p. 5). We agree that those individuals who have performed honorably should be suitable for mobilization and, therefore, believe their transfer to the IRR should be continued. However, for those subject to a general discharge, the risk associated with their suitability may be much greater. In this regard, we added information to this report showing that the more serious problems we noted were associated with those members having performed under honorable conditions (see p. 6). Our recommendation is directed toward correcting these problems.

The Army said that the policy for making transfers under the expeditious discharge program was initiated under the direction of the House Committee on Armed Services. Our review of the congressional directive indicates that it would be inappropriate for the Army to transfer individuals who were involved in serious improper conduct.

The Army disagreed with our recommendation to periodically survey members to obtain data for developing trends on member availability and for scientifically estimating yield rates. The Army, apparently misinterpreting our recommendation, said that such surveys would be inappropriate because the responses would be purely subjective. Our recommendation is to obtain objective historical and current data on member availability rather than attitudinal information.

The Army did say, however, that a contractor is currently developing a model for using actuarial data in estimating yield rates. We have revised the report to recognize this development (see p. 8). Although the Army's effort is not what we recommended, it appears to be a reasonable alternative to more scientifically estimated yield rates. We believe our recommendation remains valid, however, since the Army's effort has not been completed or tested.

The Army agreed with our recommendations that its enlisted personnel management program emphasize to members the importance of (1) volunteering for refresher training for critically needed

skills and (2) responding to semiannual questionnaires for personnel data. In commenting on voluntary refresher training, the Army agreed that only 2 percent of the total enlisted members received training in 1981, but pointed out that this represented 7 percent of the 40,000 enlisted members who were assigned a personnel management officer. The Army also said that it had recently (1) identified and ranked critical skills required in the first 30 days of a conflict and (2) completed an analysis of frequency and duration of training requirements for various skills. The report has been revised to recognize these matters (see p. 12).

The Army disagreed with our recommendation to develop and maintain data on response rates to the semiannual questionnaire sent to members. The Army doubts whether such actions would serve a useful purpose but said it would examine the issue in depth. The primary purpose of this recommendation is to generate information for the Army to measure its progress in improving the currency of information regarding member availability for mobilization.

The Army did not support our recommendation that the Congress require it to determine whether the direct enlistment program maintains proficient soldiers before authorizing a bonus. The Army said that individuals enlisting in the IRR receive the same initial entry training as do members of the Active Force. The Army also said that direct enlistees will be required to complete refresher training after the third and fifth years. The Army acknowledged, however, that because of the limited training to be given direct enlistees, it was concerned about whether skills would be maintained. As a result, it plans to evaluate proficiency of those enlisted in the 1983 direct enlistment program. Because of the Army's acknowledged concern about the program's ability to maintain proficient soldiers, we continue to believe it is more prudent to evaluate the proficiency of those who participated in the earlier direct enlistment program before a bonus is authorized.

The Army also disagreed with our recommendation that the Congress require the Army to justify the bonus amount proposed in the 97th Congress for IRR reenlistments before reauthorizing a reenlistment bonus program. The Army said that, on the basis of results from the 1981 reenlistment bonus program test, it concluded that the bonus program was viable but that the \$600 bonus amount was too small.

However, the Army had a 400-percent increase in the number of bonus recipients in the last 2 months of the fiscal year 1981 test as a result of changes in administrative procedures (see

p. 10). Defense said it believed that it would be counterproductive for the Army to devote more resources in justifying the \$900 bonus amount proposed in the 97th Congress when efforts should be directed to solving the shortfall. If data does not already exist to justify the increased amount, then the Army could seek reauthorization to test the \$600 amount for a full year, using the streamlined procedures adopted in August 1981.

Defense disagreed with our recommendation that, before deciding on Defense's proposal to increase the military service obligation, the Congress should require the Army to develop estimates of funding needed to provide periodic refresher training. Defense said that while it believes that refresher training may be required, cost would not be incurred until at least 6 years after the proposal's enactment and future budget requests would include necessary training funds.

Defense's position that the Congress does not need cost information now simply because funding will not be necessary until much later is not well founded. Extending the military service obligation is a possible solution to the IRR shortfall only if it results in maintaining proficient soldiers. It seems to us that providing to the Congress an estimate of the funds needed to maintain members' proficiency would enable a more informed congressional decision on whether extending the military service obligation is an appropriate solution to the problem. Since a decision now to adopt an extended military service obligation could prevent consideration of other alternatives, we believe it is essential to have complete information. The Army could use its recently developed information on the frequency and duration of training requirements as a basis for determining the cost estimate.

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